

STATE PLAN

STATE OF NEBRASKA

Introduction

The State of Nebraska covers 77,355 square miles. It has a total population of 1,578,417 and a poverty population of 166,293. Forty-six percent (46%) of the population resides in Lancaster (Lincoln), Douglas and Sarpy Counties (the Omaha Metro area). If asked, Nebraskans would identify the geographical areas in which they live by their proximity to Lincoln or Omaha or by using the designation of Greater Nebraska, referring generally to the area west of Lincoln. Sidney and Omaha are separated by 391 miles and 6 hours driving distance. Nebraska is the sixth most rural state in the United States. It spans from the tree lined bluffs of the Missouri River to the cornfields of central Nebraska to the vastness of the Sand Hills grazing land and on to the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Its settlers were fiercely individualistic and independent. They had to be in order to survive the bitter cold of the winters and the oppressive and unrelenting heat of the summers. This sense of independence carries over into the configuration of Nebraska's political, economic and social landscape. The state has 93 counties, one of which, Cherry, is larger than the state of Connecticut. Each of these counties obviously has a courthouse; however, given the fact that 66 counties have populations of less than 10,000 people, these communities struggle as they begin to experiment with technology. For many, a public library system with computers that are accessible to the community is a vision that bears little resemblance to reality. There are over 600 separate school districts. The same fierce

individualism that strengthened and sustained the original Nebraska settlers lives on in their descendants who ardently defend their local school districts and local systems of government.

The low income populations served by the three Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funded programs in Nebraska are as unique as the Nebraska terrain: the black mother working at a minimum wage job and living in North Omaha, the Native American residing on the Winnebago Reservation, the farmer eking out a marginal existence on less than fertile farm land in the southeast, the Hispanic worker in any one of the burgeoning meat packing plants in northeastern or central Nebraska, the Vietnamese refugee who has been resettled in Lincoln, the migrant farmers working in the sugar beet fields of western Nebraska and the elderly retiree residing throughout southeastern and north central Nebraska in counties that are graying.

It is against this backdrop that the three LSC funded programs, the Legal Aid Society (LAS), with offices in Omaha, Norfolk and Walthill, Western Nebraska Legal Services (WNLS), with offices in Grand Island, North Platte and Scottsbluff, and Legal Services of Southeast Nebraska (LSSN), with offices in Lincoln, provide services to low income persons, assisted by the Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) of the Nebraska State Bar Association (NSBA), a pro bono referral and recruitment program, and the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law and the Public Interest (Appleseed), which conducts lobbying on behalf of low income persons, as well as engages in legal work that the LSC funded programs are unable to engage in due to Congressional restrictions.

A. The State Planning Process and Participants

Nebraska's efforts at statewide planning and coordination began long before LSC's 1995

planning requirement. The three LSC funded programs held a Statewide Coordination Meeting in October, 1989 at which a number of statewide task forces were formed. These included a Statewide Advocacy Committee and a Committee on Impact Issues and Alternative Delivery Systems, as well as substantive law task forces.

This Meeting led to several additional collaborative efforts by the three LSC funded programs: The three Executive Directors agreed to and did continue to meet quarterly to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. They collaborated in producing Board training materials and did conduct one joint training session for Board Members from the three programs to field test these materials. WNLS took the lead in appointing and funding a half time State Coordinator, Georgiene Radlick Wagoner, in January, 1990. This effort culminated in the formation of the Nebraska Center for Legal Services (NCLS) later in 1990. In 1990 and 1991, NCLS published a statewide newsletter, Nucleus; conducted statewide training on issues, such as food stamps; coordinated substantive law task force meetings; organized another statewide meeting in October, 1991; coordinated Nebraska's contributions to a regional five state training plan; and worked with the three LSC funded program Executive Directors to lobby for a filing fee surcharge as a source of additional funding.

The Executive Directors also cooperated in a regional effort on behalf of the "Fundless Five", those five states in the Midwest Region that did not receive money from LSC to fund a state support center. These efforts were successful and in 1992, LAS did receive an LSC grant to operate a state support center. With this additional funding, NCLS hired a full-time director, Milo Mumgaard, and support staff and established an office in Lincoln. The three LSC funded program Executive Directors formed the Advisory Board for NCLS, meeting quarterly to

formulate policy for and oversee the operation of the organization. NCLS expanded its focus to include monitoring legislation and lobbying, when permitted by LSC regulation. NCLS also took on a broader role by arranging statewide training and coordination and by responding to requests for backup assistance from the three Nebraska Legal Services programs. For example, NCLS spearheaded the three programs' efforts in connection with Nebraska's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy in 1992. In 1993 and 1994, NCLS coordinated a class action lawsuit involving clients and advocates from all three programs. This suit successfully challenged a proposed change in state Medicaid statutes that would have eliminated Medicaid coverage for over 5,000 Nebraska families. During this same period of time, NCLS coordinated the three Legal Services' programs response to the various state welfare reform proposals and organized continuing meetings of the substantive law task forces.

In 1995, LSC funding for state support centers was terminated and major cuts in basic field grants were made as well. The Nebraska Legal Services programs were forced to cut back staff and services and were preoccupied with efforts to continue to provide basic services for their clients. While a very successful and highly regarded statewide resource had to be eliminated, this should not obscure the fact that the three LSC funded programs had worked together for six years to make statewide coordination and planning a reality.

The Nebraska State Bar Association has taken an ongoing leadership role in the state planning process in more recent years. Following submission of the 1995 State Plan to the Legal Services Corporation by the three LSC funded programs, David Houghton, then President of the NSBA, established the NSBA Commission on Access to Justice. Its mission was " [to] analyze the present situation with respect to access to the justice system by all people, including current

federal funding for the Legal Services Corporation, private volunteer programs, and pro bono efforts by the organized Bar and individual lawyers. The task force will, after analyzing the current state of access to the justice system, make recommendations with respect to the appropriate bar association responses to the current situation of access to justice, including, but not limited to, private foundation development for support of legal services to those without access, law school legal clinic programs, volunteer lawyer projects, alternative funding sources, filing fees surcharges and coordination of various efforts.”

Service providers, attorneys representing various local bar associations, the NSBA and various constituencies throughout the state were selected by President Houghton to serve on the Commission.¹ The Commission held three large group meetings and in addition, members met as participants in the following subcommittees: Delivery Systems and Volunteer Programs; Legislative Action and Funding Alternatives; Communications and Marketing.

The following recommendations were made by the Delivery Systems and Volunteer Programs Subcommittee and submitted to the NSBA:

I. Increase the flexibility of the civil justice system, thereby expanding the options available to people seeking help with a legal problem. Efforts must be made to help existing programs do what they do best, to create new programs with innovative approaches and to integrate all services effectively.

In sum, we need to strengthen, expand and interrelate all the services presently available

¹ Those attending included: Glenda Pierce, Chairperson, Kathryn Bellman, D.C. Bradford, Steve Bruckner, James Cavanaugh, William Dittrick, Marsha Fangmeyer, Karen Flowers, Fred Franklin, Jim Gordon, Clark Grant, Tom Hoarty, David Houghton, Dan Kinnamon, Catherine Mahern, Milo Mumgaard, Howard Olsen, Michael Pallesen, Sheila Philips-Hawes, Harold Rock, Kevin Ruser, Kathleen Severens, Karen Shepard, Roberta Stick, Golby Uhler, and Georgiene Radlick Wagoner.

in Nebraska:

1. Pro Se services
2. Direct Legal Services (legal services programs, clinic programs and pro bono programs)
3. Mediation services
4. Public interest organizations (ACLU, Appleseed Center, etc.)
5. Other services that may not yet exist

.Coordinate intake/referral procedures with all above service providers. Clients' needs should be assessed and direct referrals to the appropriate service made.

.Coordinate intake/referral statewide through the use of technology. Assessment of present technology must be made. Some type of centralized intake and referral system that would be consumer-friendly would increase usage and satisfaction.

II. Increase pro bono services by the private bar to low income individuals.

.Recruit more volunteer lawyers. Use bar leaders to make face to face or telephone contact with their colleagues.

.Recruit more volunteer lawyers by offering legal services mentoring or training for areas of law they are not familiar with. Expand the use of a lawyer mentor to work with a second chair volunteer in a new area of the law. Expand the use of reduced fee mediation training for those willing to donate time as mediators.

.Recruit more lawyers by going to the law schools/or to the swearing in ceremonies.

The Communications and Marketing Subcommittee recommended that there be a well planned public awareness campaign that would focus on press conferences and publications. It

was suggested that a press conference be held to coincide with the introduction of the filing fee surcharge bill in the 1997 Unicameral. In regard to publications, it was suggested that the NSBA newsletter carry an article on legal services in each edition and that local bar newsletters would be used to get information out to local attorneys regarding the work of the Legal Services programs in their areas.

The Legislative Action and Funding Alternatives Subcommittee supported alternative fund raising initiatives and conjectured that effective fund raising initiatives must be tied to specific needs rather than to a general commitment to access to justice; however, the subcommittee also wanted emphasis placed on the fact that the provision of legal services to the poor is not the sole responsibility of lawyers but is a societal obligation requiring full participation from all members of society if we are to have equal access to justice.

At the final meeting of the entire Commission, there was unanimous support for proposing filing fee surcharge legislation. At the time these Commission meetings were being held, the LSC-funded programs were coping with the uncertainties presented by the federal appropriations process, whether there would be continued funding for LSC and, if so, how much, were allaying concerns of staff and were developing strategies as to how to continue to deliver services with diminished economic resources. The Commission's main focus was on expanding appropriations for the programs. The NSBA took a leadership role, along with assistance from WNLS and Appleseed, in drafting filing fee surcharge legislation, finding a sponsor for the bill and using its lobbyists to steer the bill successfully through the legislative process. In 1997, filing fee surcharge legislation became reality with January 1, 1998 becoming the effective date of the bill. Continuing to build on the accomplishments of LB729, the filing fee bill, and

continue the unfinished work of the Commission on Access to Justice, D. C. Bradford, President of the NSBA, convened a Legal Services Summit on April 24, 1998. Representatives of the various service providers, funders and the judiciary participated in this meeting at which each exchanged information regarding their respective roles in the provision of civil legal services to low income Nebraskans and the challenges of the future.²

A follow up meeting was held on May 6, 1998 that included Kathryn Bellman, Jane Schoenike, Roberta Stick, Milo Alexander and Georgiene Radlick Wagoner. The state planning process and a statewide hotline were discussed at that time. Thereafter, on June 19, 1998 there was a day long meeting of the LSC-funded program executive directors and board chairs which was facilitated by Ann Bartsch, a consultant from Oregon . Participating were Roberta Stick and Kathryn Olson from LSSN, Milo Alexander and Mike Schliech from LAS, and Georgiene Radlick Wagoner and Steve Voigt from WNLS. The various points contained in Program Letter 98-1 were discussed by the participants and preliminary suggestions were made regarding collaboration and coordination in intake, resource development, training and technology. It was concluded that a supplemental meeting was necessary and should involve representatives of the NSBA.

²The participants and the groups they represented are as follows: D.C. “Woody” Bradford, NSBA President and Jane Schoenike, Executive Director; Kathryn Bellman, Director of the NSBA Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP); Georgiene Radlick Wagoner, Executive Director of Western Nebraska Legal Services (WNLS); Roberta Stick, Executive Director of Legal Services of Southeast Nebraska (LSSN) and Kathryn Olson, Board Chair; Milo Alexander, Interim Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society (LAS); Kevin Ruser, Director of the University of Nebraska College of Law Clinical Program; Catherine Mahern, Director of the Creighton School of Law Clinical Program; Milo Mumgaard, Executive Director and Vard Johnson, Board President of the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law and the Public Interest; Jerry Soucie, a Staff Attorney, and Susan Jacobs, Chair of the Commission on Public Advocacy; Gary Fischer, Director of the Fair Housing Center; David Webb, a member of the Nebraska Lawyers Trust Account Foundation Board and Sheila Moore, a staff member; Gary McFarland, a clerk with the Nebraska federal district court; Glenda Pierce, Associate Dean of the University of Nebraska College of Law; Harold Rock representing the NSBA Foundation; Supreme Court Justice Kenneth Stephan; Lancaster County District Court Judge Earl Witthoff; County Court Judge Mary Gilbride; and Juvenile Court Judge Robert O’Neal.

That meeting took place on July 8, 1998. Its participants included Roberta Stick and Kathryn Olson from LSSN; Georgiene Radlick Wagoner and Steve Voigt from WNLS; Milo Alexander and Mike Schliech from LAS; Woody Bradford, Jane Schoenike, Sam Clinch, and Kathryn Bellman from the NSBA. The discussion focused on the current intake, advice and referral system utilized by the three LSC-funded programs and the VLP. As a result of this broad ranging discussion, the participants agreed to explore the feasibility and benefits of implementing a statewide intake, advice and referral system, with the LSC-funded programs agreeing to seek their respective Boards' approval of this process before moving forward with this initiative..

A determination was made that at the next meeting, the group should be expanded to include Milo Mumgaard, the Executive Director of Appleseed, which provides representation in restricted matters, and James Mowbray, Executive Director of the Commission on Public Advocacy, whose organization might fund the cost of a consultant to advise the group regarding the statewide intake system. That meeting took place on August 12, 1998 and included the following participants: Jane Schoenike, Woody Bradford, Sam Clinch, Kathryn Bellman, Georgiene Radlick Wagoner, Milo Alexander, Mike Schliech, Milo Mumgaard, James Mowbray, Roberta Stick and Kathryn Olson. The group discussed a statewide intake, advice and referral system and the various other issues set forth in program letter 98-1 although discussion of system configuration was deferred to the larger group meeting to be held on September 8, 1998.

That follow up meeting included the following participants: Milo Alexander and Mike Schleich from LAS, Georgiene Radlick Wagoner and Steve Voigt from WNLS, Roberta Stick and Kathryn Olson from LSSN, Catherine Mahern from the Creighton Law School Clinic, Milo Mumgaard from the Appleseed Center, Judge Mary Doyle from the County Judges Association,

Doris Huffman, Executive Director of the Nebraska Lawyers Trust Account Foundation and the Nebraska State Bar Foundation, and John Lenich, representing the University of Nebraska College of Law. The group discussed intake, technology, training, self-help for clients, pro bono recruitment, resource development and how best to deliver services to low income persons in Nebraska. There was consensus on the goals that are set forth in this Plan and agreement that the LSC funded programs and the NSBA would continue to meet quarterly to monitor the progress toward meeting these goals. The NSBA will act as facilitator for these meetings.

Representatives of the three LSC funded programs and the NSBA met again on September 22, 1998 to give final approval and support to this State Plan and authorizing its submission to LSC. Present were Roberta Stick, Kathryn Olson, Milo Alexander, Milo Mumgaard, Steve Voigt, Georgiene Radlick Wagoner, Jim Mowbray, Jane Schoenike, Kathryn Bellman, and D.C. Bradford.

Throughout this planning process, the three Legal Services Executive Directors have met with their respective Boards to provide information regarding the evolution of the State Plan, to gather feedback from attorney and client representatives and to incorporate this in the final document.

B. Areas to be addressed

1. Intake, Advice and Referral

a. Strengths and weaknesses of current approach

Each of the three LSC funded programs in Nebraska and the VLP conduct centralized intake, advice and referral systems. Each has provided appropriate training to the staff who conduct intake and all have determined that a centralized, telephone intake system is the most

viable approach to use in a predominantly rural state so that all applicants for service, regardless of where they reside, can have equal access to service providers.

LAS has an appointment line that is open 18 hours a week and is staffed by attorneys and paralegals. The Omaha office does not need a toll free number because telephone calls to Omaha from the surrounding counties are local calls. The Norfolk office staff conducts telephone intake on Monday and Thursday mornings. The office's two attorneys and two paralegals all take telephone calls. The Walthill office does intake through the Rural Response Hotline which is open 40 hours per week. It is staffed by a paralegal. Both the Norfolk and Walthill offices have toll free numbers that are used for intake calls. LAS has received a grant from the Commission on Public Advocacy which it is using to replace its existing telephone/intake system. The new equipment, identified as automatic call dispatch, will be used to pass calls on to the appropriate attorneys or offices. The current appointment line system will be replaced by two paralegals who will provide intake, advice and referral. The system will operate 35 hours per week. The new telephone equipment has the capability of being moved or expanded if a determination is made by all the legal services providers within Nebraska that a statewide, centralized intake system will benefit clients and expand their access to the legal system.

LSSN support staff conduct telephone or "in person" intake 35 hours per week with additional hours added for emergencies. Staff and volunteer attorneys provide information, advice and referral. A toll free number is available for clients who reside outside Lincoln.

WNLS operates a centralized AccessLine throughout its service area that operates 20 hours per week between the hours of 9:00 and 2:00 Monday through Thursday. For applicants

for service who telephone at other times, an assessment is done to determine if their problem requires immediate response. If so, they talk with the “attorney of the day.” If there is no immediacy, they are informed of the time when they may call back. WNLS has a toll free number for persons wishing to access their services.

The VLP’s support staff conduct telephone intake daily from 8:30 to 4:00 utilizing a toll free line. To supplement telephone intake, some applicants for service are sent a brief application form. Clients who need information, advice or referral receive this while those needing referral to a volunteer attorney are apprised that this is the next step in the process.

The three LSC-funded programs have internally centralized telephone intake systems that operate within relevant geographical regions and thereby provide easy and even access to eligible clients. Each of the programs conduct intake using technology that records and manages client data; however, each program’s case management system is different. The programs will explore the benefits of adopting a single case management system and whether these benefits outweigh the costs that will be incurred in converting existing stored data to a form that will be compatible with a new software system.

There is currently no mechanism to use to refer persons between the LSC funded programs or between the LSC-funded programs and the VLP by using computer technology. Client information is referred by fax transmission or copies of relevant materials are mailed. The receiving office must then complete its own intake form and conduct a conflict check. The four programs will conduct a study regarding the numbers of clients who are referred between programs to identify whether the costs of purchasing compatible technology are justified or if other uniform systems should be developed. For example, for clients whom LSSN refers to the

VLP, it sends copies of its intake forms, as well as a memo summarizing the information obtained from an interview with the client. While this system does not substitute for electronic transmission of information to the VLP, this may be a useable and cost efficient alternative to use.

The three LSC-funded programs have agreed to complete intake forms for persons who have problems in a particular program's service area rather than requiring the applicant to contact the office in which he/she resides so that a referral can then be made to the appropriate program. This is a change in procedure that will be more user friendly for applicants for service and avoid duplication of efforts by the initiating and receiving offices.

The staff of the three LSC funded programs and the VLP who conduct intake are familiar with resources available to clients throughout the state and the various program directors are able to access specialized legal expertise within the state either through personal contacts with attorneys whose expertise is known or by using the resources of the VLP. As part of the ongoing monitoring of the intake process, updated information regarding resources will be exchanged.

Currently, WNLS provides statewide intake for migrants. This intake is seasonal and occurs between May and October to coincide with the growing season.

Through development of this State Plan, the legal services providers have agreed that development of a coordinated, statewide intake system should be explored.

b. Goals to strengthen and expand services to eligible client

To determine the feasibility of a statewide intake, advice and referral system, to evaluate its effectiveness in improving and expanding access to the legal system and to propose an implementation plan.

To expand intake hours so that all applicants for service within the state will have access to local programs a minimum of 35 hours per week, including some nontraditional business hours.

To evaluate the benefits of having compatible technology to record and manage client data.

To develop a uniform method of referral to the VLP.

To formulate a statewide policy that permits applicants for service to contact the LSC funded program in whose service area their problems arise, rather than where they reside.

c. Major steps and timetable necessary to achieve these goals

The service providers were asked to formulate questions they wished to have a consultant answer regarding a centralized statewide intake, advice and referral system. These questions are now being forwarded to several national experts in coordinated intake systems. If necessary, a consultant will be brought to Nebraska to meet with the various service providers and respond to additional questions. Each of the LSC funded programs have discussed the feasibility of a statewide intake system with their respective Boards of Directors and there has been agreement to gather information regarding the mechanics of operating such a system, staffing and costs. When this information is received, the Boards will meet to consider the advisability of converting to such a system. Information from the consultants will be received within 3 months. If it is determined that a consultant will need to meet in person with the service providers, arrangements will be made within 60 days. The Boards of Directors of the service providers will meet within 45 days thereafter to decide whether or not to convert from individual programmatic intake to a statewide, centralized intake system. If the determination is made to develop a statewide,

centralized intake system, a committee comprised of representatives from the various service providers will need to be formed to steer the process.

The various service providers will continue to meet quarterly with the NSBA serving as the organizer and facilitator of these meetings. Discussions will focus on intake hours, technology and methods to be used to expand client access to intake systems. Minimum standards will be established in these various areas. The next meeting is to take place on December 1, 1998 at which the following agenda items will be discussed: 1. Hotline Consultants: Centralized Intake; 2. Legislation: Domestic Relations Calendar; 3. Technology: Report on Computer Systems; 4. Seminar in Omaha: Pro Bono Seminar - Legal Services Training; 5. Fundraising: Statewide Fundraising Campaign for Legal Services; 6. Response from LSC to October 1 Planning Report.

2. Technology

a. Strengths and weaknesses of current approach

Acknowledging the importance of technology in maximizing services to clients and in simplifying the work of advocates and staff, the Legal Services providers have ensured that each case handler in the three LSC funded programs and the VLP has a desktop or lap top computer and the necessary skills and ability to use this technology effectively.

All WNLS staff have computers. Attorneys have lap tops computers with modems so that they can do intake if they are “on the road.” The Grand Island office staff are fully networked and plans are underway to network the Scottsbluff office by November 1. A wide area network will link the Scottsbluff and Grand Island offices by November 1. Both the Grand Island and Scottsbluff offices have at least one computer accessible to all staff that has e-mail

and Internet connectivity.

All LAS staff have computers. They have benefitted from donations of equipment from various law offices in Omaha. The computer systems in the Omaha and Norfolk offices are networked internally. It is uncertain given the age of the physical structure in Walthill in which LAS has offices and given its designation as a historical landmark as to whether or not the computers can be networked, but this will be investigated. There is currently access to e-mail and the Internet in the Omaha offices from two computers and there will be access in the Norfolk and Walthill offices by November 1.

Beginning in January, 1997, LSSN purchased computers for all staff. These are networked and all staff have e-mail and Internet access at his/her own desk.

Each of the three LSC funded programs have a staff person or persons who have knowledge regarding the office's technology and have the ability to troubleshoot or conduct training.

The State of Nebraska does not have a statewide technology plan to assure the coordination of technology efforts and to plan for improvements nor is there a plan to develop and allocate resources for necessary periodic replacement or upgrading of hardware and/or software. This will be something that the planners need to focus on. Additionally, each of the three LSC funded programs and the VLP have separate case management software. The state planners will evaluate the efficacy/efficiency/benefits of converting to a single case management system.

The NSBA maintains a Web site that provides information regarding programs and services available. It does not currently use this to publicize clients who need representation by

pro bono attorneys; however, it does utilize batch faxing as a method of contacting a large number of volunteers and publicizing cases needing referral quickly. LAS has a Web page that includes the addresses and telephone numbers of the three offices, a history of LAS, program priorities, a listing of staff, the program's mission statement, the 1997 annual report, a description of LAS' pro bono project and the divorce, debtors' rights and landlord-tenant books. WNLS has a Web site containing information regarding the program, its staff, program priorities and client-related information. LSSN does not currently have a Web site but will develop one prior to December 31, 1998 containing information similar to that found at the other providers' Web sites.

As reported in the response to Section B.1 *infra*, each of the three LSC funded programs and the VLP use telephone intake and advice systems that take advantage of appropriate technology including case management systems. LAS will be implementing an advanced telephone system utilizing grant funds from the Commission on Public Advocacy. All the service providers use technology for word processing, automated document assembly and client conflict checks.

The service providers do not currently have a computerized brief and pleading bank and recognize that their failure to have such a system is a detriment to the provision of efficient legal services to their clients. The providers will work with staff of the Commission on Public Advocacy who have been successful in utilizing Web sites to create "secure" access to similar types of information. The providers will also work with the NSBA staff to explore the feasibility of utilizing the NSBA Web site for a similar purpose.

All the service providers use CDRAM technology and Internet access to conduct

electronic legal research. WNLS advocates have Premise and Am.Jur. as additional technological tools. In the Omaha and Norfolk offices, LAS advocates utilize Premise, Westlaw, Am.Jur. and ALR as methods of conducting computerized legal research. All LSSN advocates have access to Premise from their computers. This system permits them to access Nebraska statutory and case law. Access to Westlaw is also available, if necessary. The three LSC funded programs will be exploring the feasibility of using Versus Law, a legal research system available through the Internet for a reasonable flat fee monthly cost. Information regarding this program was obtained from the Commission on Public Advocacy during one of the state planning meetings. The programs will also explore the feasibility of getting a more advantageous subscriber rate if they all subscribe to the same computerized legal research system. The programs will also work with the Technology Center at the University of Nebraska College of Law to gather additional information regarding how to use their computer systems to their maximum capabilities.

While each program has e-mail capability, case handlers do not use this method of communication to exchange information among themselves. Nor do they use list serves. Both of these avenues of communication will be studied by the state planners as part of their on-going meetings.

b. Goals to strengthen and expand services to eligible clients

To network computers used by advocates within each LSC funded program's office.

To identify staff person(s) with computer expertise and exchange that information with other service providers.

To develop a statewide technology plan to assure the coordination of technology efforts.

To develop a statewide plan to develop and allocate resources for necessary periodic replacement or upgrading of hardware and/or software.

To evaluate the efficacy/efficiency/benefits of converting to a single statewide case management system.

To ensure that all service providers have Web sites with relevant information for clients and volunteer attorneys.

To develop a computerized brief and pleading bank, identify staff responsible for collecting, inputting and publicizing this information and develop a method to limit access to this system to Legal Services providers or pro bono attorneys.

To expand the use and availability of inexpensive computerized legal research among case advocates.

To determine Y2K compliance for critical systems.

c. Major steps and timetable necessary to achieve these goals

We will identify person(s) within each program with expertise or involvement with technology to meet on a regular basis to evaluate issues of technology raised in this plan with the first meeting taking place within 30 days. There will be a report made to the respective boards within 60 days after the first meeting. Development of additional specific goals will be processed over the subsequent 12 months.

3. Access to the Courts, Self-Help and Preventive Education

a. Strengths and weaknesses of current approach

Cyclical cutbacks in federal funding and concomitant reductions in staff and limitations of types of cases in which LSC funded programs can and will provide services create the greatest

barrier to client access to the legal system.

There are approximately 5,000 active attorneys in Nebraska. Three quarters of these reside in Lancaster, Douglas and Sarpy Counties. In the rural communities, there are an inadequate number of pro bono attorneys to supplement the work of the LSC funded programs and provide direct case representation.

In order to expand access opportunities for clients, LSSN and WNLS each offer clients who meet certain criteria the opportunity to obtain dissolutions of marriage through pro se representation. LSSN makes this available to clients who have been separated for 90 days and who have no issues in dispute. WNLS makes its program available to clients with no children and no issues in dispute. It is planning to expand the program to include clients who have agreements that have mediated any issues in dispute. In both cases, the goal of pro se representation is to provide access to the courts that would not otherwise be available to clients because representation is not within an individual program's priorities. The mechanism to accomplish this differs slightly between offices. WNLS is developing an instructional manual and accompanying forms. The client attends a training session at which the process is explained and then the client completes the forms. The client can attend a clinic at three critical times: prior to filing, at the time a settlement agreement has been prepared, and prior to the decree being entered. LSSN provides clients with forms which they complete in a group setting under the direction of an LSSN staff attorney or a volunteer attorney to initiate a dissolution action. The client then returns for a second clinic to complete the forms needed for the final hearing. LAS has not developed pro se materials in part because of past opposition to the process from the district court judges in its service area that cannot be overcome without the assistance of an

external force. In parts of LSSN's service area, similar opposition makes pro se representation not feasible.

WNLS has also developed pro se materials to be used by persons seeking a name change.

All participants in the state planning process agree that the judiciary in Nebraska is generally not supportive of the concept of pro se representation, partly because the burden in such cases falls on the court to advise persons as to how to proceed. This problem can theoretically be remedied by providing adequate pro se materials or instructions and thereby make pro se litigants more efficient and effective in their presentations to the court. There is also a perception that the judiciary fears that pro se representation will result in clogging the system.

Among the participants in the state planning process, there was discussion of the success of pro se representation in small claims matters, in asserting claims of exemptions and in protection order proceedings. Such pro se representation has been made possible through the passage of legislation. From this discussion, it was concluded that efforts would be made to formulate legislation similar to that controlling small claims court procedure in which the petitioner could initiate an action for dissolution of marriage in which he/she would represent him/herself. If there were matters that the respondent wished to address with the assistance of an attorney, he/she could remove the matter to the regular docket. Now that county courts have jurisdiction in dissolution actions, the suggestions outlined might be even more feasible to accomplish.

There is currently no coordinated effort to ensure that community legal education materials targeted to substantive law areas of interest to low income persons are available throughout the state. NSBA has produced brochures on a variety of substantive legal areas in

English, Spanish and Vietnamese and these are available for dissemination on a statewide basis. These brochures provide a general overview of various topics but because of their appeal to the general population do not necessarily focus on issues of particular concern to low income persons.

In the past, the LSC funded programs had developed booklets on substantive law areas affecting low income persons, e.g. consumer, small claims court, divorce, and housing. Not all of these booklets have been updated in recent years. LAS does disseminate handbooks on landlord-tenant issues, debtors' rights, divorce and agricultural finance. LSSN has worked with Lincoln Action Program to develop a landlord tenant booklet that is distributed to their respective clients. WNLS has produced pamphlets on public housing as well as flyers in Spanish regarding a variety of substantive law topics that complement advice letters that are sent to clients. There needs to be a coordinated effort to ensure that there are updated brochures on relevant substantive law areas, produced in English, Spanish and Vietnamese, and available for dissemination to low income persons statewide.

WNLS has recently received a grant from the Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy to fund the equivalent of a half-time attorney and a full time paralegal and the costs of contracted technical assistance to develop and implement a centralized, statewide, computerized forum for dissemination, preservation, collection and maintenance of substantive and procedural poverty law-related information. This "library" will be accessible not only to LSC providers, but also to participating pro bono attorneys, to related service agency providers and to low income Nebraskans. This project has as its purpose the avoidance of duplication of effort and better utilization of limited attorney resources. Pleadings, briefs, forms, practice manuals, community

education material and other information germane to legal services work will be maintained in a document repository that can be electronically searched and down loaded. By centralizing information and providing a forum for discussion, the collective learning of all advocates for low income persons will be available throughout the state on a continuing basis. LAS and LSSN staff attorneys who have significant expertise in the various substantive law areas are available, if needed, to serve as “readers” and “reviewers” as the updating takes place. Those accessing the service made available by WNLS will be jointly responsible for providing the costs of upkeep of these shared services and individually responsible for program related costs.

Each of the three LSC funded programs provides educational opportunities for clients in their respective service areas. WNLS has experimented with conducting its pro se divorce clinics every other month using satellite television. It also conducts community legal education forums on a variety of substantive law topics that are scheduled throughout its service area to coincide with court hearings. WNLS sets up these forums to coincide with court hearings that advocates have scheduled and relies on human service agencies in the communities to promote WNLS’ availability to the public and provide input regarding appropriate topics for a particular locale. LAS conducts weekly client education through a Landlord-Tenant Clinic. Every three weeks, a Bankruptcy or Debtors’ Rights Clinic is conducted. LSSN conducts community education, approximately one time per month, at meetings organized by other service providers in the community on a variety of substantive law topics that generally include housing, family and consumer law. WNLS, LAS and LSSN have agreed to conduct statewide educational sessions via the satellite television system on various relevant substantive law topics on a least a quarterly basis by pooling staff expertise from the three programs. The programs would share costs of this

training proportionally.

The participants in the state planning process identified a multiplicity of access issues for clients including distance, language, disparate power, failure to qualify for free legal services due to program priorities. In regard to the language issue, for many years different committees of the NSBA have been working to develop a set of standards to be used to qualify court interpreters. Approval for such standards will need to come from the court but the NSBA through its committee structure can continue to gather relevant information to be used in this process.

b. Goals to strengthen and expand services to eligible clients

To facilitate statewide access to the courts for clients wishing to represent themselves in actions for dissolution of marriage through legislation or court rule.

To provide comprehensive, up-to-date printed and computerized information for dissemination throughout the state on various substantive law topics of interest to low income persons in the major languages spoken in the state.

To provide regular opportunities on a statewide basis for clients to receive information regarding various substantive law topics of interest to low income persons through staff or volunteer attorney presentations.

To develop standards to be used to qualify court interpreters.

To develop appropriate alternate dispute resolution as an adjunct to the provision of direct legal services.

To help clients assess whether or not pro se representation is feasible for them and to provide lawyers for clients who do not wish to represent themselves or who, by the nature of the matter, are unable to represent themselves.

c. Major steps and timetable necessary to achieve these goals

The Legal Services programs and the NSBA will work through the NSBA Committee structure utilizing either the Judiciary or Legislative Committees or the VLP Advisory Committee or the Family Law Section to discuss how best to utilize pro se representation in certain court proceedings and then to develop legislation authorizing a mechanism for pro se dissolution actions, if legislation is deemed to be the appropriate vehicle to accomplish this. This will be accomplished within the next 12 months.

Booklets on relevant substantive law areas of interest to low income persons will be updated, if needed. All legal service providers will have access to booklets that have been produced or will be produced. This will be a cooperative effort between the NSBA through the VLP and the Public Service Committee and the representatives of the Legal Services providers. This will be accomplished within the next 12 months.

Pleadings, briefs, forms, practice manuals, community educational material will be maintained so that it can be electronically searched and downloaded. WNLS will be responsible for accomplishing this by June, 1999.

Community legal education through satellite television will be developed and offered to clients residing throughout the State of Nebraska. The first educational opportunity will occur prior to December 30, 1998. Designated advocates from the Legal Services providers will be responsible for organizing this educational opportunity with assistance from Appleseed where appropriate.

4. Coordination of Legal Work, Training, Information and Expert Assistance

a. Strengths and weaknesses of current approach

In regard to providing training for advocates, each LSC funded program allots money in its budget to provide training opportunities consistent with each advocate's needs. For the last three years, LSSN has made application on behalf of the three LSC-funded programs to Nebraska Continuing Legal Education (NCLE) for scholarships that permit one advocate from each of the offices to attend trainings sponsored by NCLE. NCLE organizes and produces the major training efforts in Nebraska. For informational purposes, it should be noted that Nebraska does not have a mandatory requirement regarding continuing legal education. LSSN has also negotiated with the University of Nebraska College of Law which also produces training seminars and materials to permit Legal Services attorneys to attend its trainings on a reduced fee basis. Training opportunities specific to poverty law issues, e.g. welfare legislation and regulations in Nebraska, are being developed by Appleseed in accordance with funding received from the Nebraska State Bar Foundation for that specific purpose. Appleseed also collaborated with the VLP and LSSN to produce training for Legal Services advocates and volunteer attorneys regarding representation of children seeking SSI benefits.

The programs acknowledge the importance of identifying experts in specific poverty law areas and publicizing that information among staff. On an informal basis, that information is available and conferencing certainly takes place across programs lines; however, there has been no formal institutionalization of this process and that may be a helpful endeavor.

b. Goals to strengthen and expand services to eligible clients

To develop, recruit and promulgate a list of staff and volunteers with expertise in specific substantive law areas.

To support advocates designated as "experts" by giving them release time to allow them

to mentor and train other advocates.

To continue to provide cost free statewide training opportunities for Legal Services advocates.

To identify training needs that Legal Services advocates have and develop and implement these opportunities in a cost- and time-efficient manner.

To assist the VLP in its efforts to develop a desk manual for pro bono attorneys on various substantive law areas of interest to low income persons.

To conduct statewide training opportunities for case advocates and pro bono attorneys.

To utilize Web sites and list serves to post significant judicial, legislative and administrative developments and to encourage staff to enter such information on these Web sites and regularly review them.

c. Major steps and timetable necessary to achieve these goals

The NSBA, with the assistance of NCLE, will organize a quarterly meeting whose focus will be on a substantive law topic that is relevant to a poverty law practice. The Nebraska State Bar Foundation will be approached to fund the cost of reproduction of materials produced by NCLE that may be used in such trainings.

Pro bono round tables that have been organized by the VLP throughout the state for distribution of the desk books and recruitment of additional volunteers will be used as a vehicle to provide statewide training for Legal Services advocates. The first such meeting will take place in Omaha in January, 1999 and will give Legal Services advocates the opportunity to conduct a two hour training in the area of public benefits. Future round tables and the featured topic areas for discussion will be coordinated by the three Nebraska Legal Services programs, NCLE, the

NSBA and the Nebraska Appleseed Center.

5. Private Attorney Involvement

a. Strengths and weaknesses of current approach

In Nebraska, each of the three LSC funded programs and the NSBA are involved in recruitment of pro bono attorneys and referral of cases to private attorneys. The three LSC funded programs do recruitment and referral within their respective service areas while the NSBA's VLP recruits attorneys on a statewide basis to provide direct case representation to low income persons. The VLP is a volunteer legal assistance project and referral network founded by the NSBA in 1983 and predominantly funded by that organization. Its purpose is to provide legal assistance to low income persons who cannot hire lawyers and who cannot receive assistance through one of the three federally-funded legal services programs operating in the state. It employs two part time support staff persons who conduct telephone interviews to determine eligibility for service and type of problem. For cases within program priorities, the director, a volunteer or support staff begins the placement process. Generally, referrals are made by the VLP for representation in matters in which the local programs are not able to provide assistance because of staffing constrictions and program priorities. Its recruitment effort is done in conjunction with the trainings it is offering on a statewide basis. It works in concert with the LSC-funded programs to ensure that the VLP complements and does not duplicate the services provided by those providers.

The following describes local recruitment efforts undertaken by the LSC funded programs: LSSN recruits volunteers from the Lincoln Bar Association to provide telephone information and advice to clients throughout its service areas on Thursday Nights. It also recruits

volunteer attorneys throughout the sixteen rural counties in its service area to provide direct case representation in family law matters through reduced fee contracts.

WNLS recruits attorneys throughout its service area to provide services to clients throughout its service area. These attorneys represent the clients through reduced fee contracts and through providing information, advice and community education.

LAS has a part-time pro bono coordinator who recruits volunteer attorneys in its service area to provide direct case representation in cases that fall within program priorities but are not determined to be time intensive. The program also enters into reduced fee contracts with attorneys serving Dodge and Burt Counties and those rural counties served by its Norfolk office.

The NSBA takes a major role in recognizing volunteer efforts. At its annual convention, it recognizes outstanding contributions of volunteer attorney(s) through conferring of the Robert Spire Award. In addition, in its statewide publication, the Nebraska Lawyer that is published monthly, the VLP lists volunteers who have provided significant services to low income persons during a specific period of time. The July, 1998 issue of the Nebraska Lawyer focused on civil legal services to the poor and contained articles written by Kathryn Bellman regarding the VLP, Milo Alexander regarding the provision of legal services in Nebraska and Roberta Stick regarding LSSN's Thursday Night Lawyers Program. Volunteer attorneys are recognized in each community through the pro bono round tables.

On a local level, volunteer efforts are recognized through publicity in local bar newsletters, e.g. the Lincoln Bar Association Newsletter, and through issuance of certificates of appreciation and recognition at local bar events.

The NSBA, with the assistance of private attorneys and Legal Services staff attorneys, has

developed a desk manual for distribution to and use by volunteer attorneys. In 1997-98, sections on divorce and housing have been published and round table trainings introducing these sections have been held in 10 locations throughout Nebraska. Legal Services attorneys and Board members have been involved in the development of these sections and in the trainings. Additional sections on employment law, Social Security and SSI, guardianships/conservatorships, and bankruptcy/debtor/ creditor matters are being planned. In these efforts, Legal Services attorneys will again be involved as “readers” or in the actual development of sections.

The LSC funded programs acknowledge that the current system may have the appearance of some duplication of effort although the reality is that many attorneys recruited by the local programs also volunteer their services to the VLP. The dual recruitment effort may, in fact, expand the availability of volunteer legal services to clients. Until 1996, LAS and LSSN subgranted with the NSBA, as part of their PAI Plans, to provide partial funding for the VLP thereby “centralizing” the functions of pro bono recruitment and referral. Cutbacks in federal funding led the LSC funded programs to reevaluate how best to expand pro bono services to clients and resulted in the current focus on local recruitment to supplement statewide recruitment. The service providers are willing to reevaluate the current situation that has been in operation for three years to assess its efficiency and effectiveness.

b. Goals to strengthen and expand services to eligible clients

To provide whatever technical assistance and/or mentoring is needed by private attorneys to provide direct case representation to low income persons

To expand the number of volunteer attorneys available to low income persons throughout

the state with particular emphasis on providing services in rural areas where the pool of attorneys is small

To publicize the accomplishments of the LSC funded programs and pro bono attorneys and the unmet legal needs of low income Nebraskans

To publicize the 1992 resolution of the NSBA House of Delegates setting aspirational standards of 20 volunteer hours per year for each Nebraska attorney

To explore the feasibility of having a statewide PAI Coordinator funded proportionately by the various service providers and the efficiency and effectiveness of such an approach

c. Major steps and timetable necessary to achieve these goals

The VLP will distribute its desk manual dealing with various substantive areas in which private attorneys may be asked to provide services to low income persons and expand the sections contained in the manual. This process will be ongoing.

As part of its recruitment of private attorneys, the VLP will identify attorneys who may only be interested in serving as mentors and making that information available to new volunteers.

The President and Executive Director of the NSBA will assume the responsibility of refreshing the recollection of members of the NSBA regarding the aspirational standard that has been set by the House of Delegates.

Contact will be made with the Deans of the two law schools in Nebraska to solicit their assistance in permitting delegates from the Legal Services programs, the VLP and the Nebraska Lawyers Trust Account Foundation to talk with law students enrolled in the Ethics class which all students must take and educate them regarding their obligation to provide pro bono services to persons who cannot afford to pay for legal services. The contact will be made within the next 60

days and the procedure outlined will be utilized on a semester basis, assuming agreement by the Deans.

The three LSC-funded programs will determine the feasibility and cost efficiency of hiring a single PAI Coordinator for the state to handle recruitment and training of pro bono attorneys through their quarterly meetings.

The NSBA will continue its recruitment efforts by providing information regarding the VLP to new admittees to the Bar.

6. Resource Development

a. Strengths and weaknesses of current approach

The NSBA's Commission on Access to Justice, comprised of representatives from all parts of Nebraska interested in the provision of civil legal services to the poor, recommended in 1997 that the NSBA support the introduction of filing fee surcharge legislation. The NSBA drafted legislation, identified a state senator who would introduce the legislation and through its lobbyists helped steer the bill through the legislative process. As a result of this effort, effective January 1, 1998, \$600,000 was available for distribution to successful applicants for this funding. The Commission on Public Advocacy, the entity charged with administration of these funds, solicited grant applications and made awards effective June 1. Recipients of this funding included LAS, WNLS, LSSN, the VLP, the Nebraska Appleseed Center, Creighton University's School of Law Clinic, the Lincoln Lancaster Mediation Center and the Southeast Nebraska Mediation Center.

The NSBA is planning to undertake a statewide fund raising campaign beginning in 1999. Contributors to such a mail campaign are being asked to donate the equivalent of one billable

hour. They will be given the opportunity to “check off” the nonprofit provider of civil legal services to the poor to which they wish their money to be distributed. The NSBA has identified attorneys throughout the state who will make follow up contacts as part of this campaign. Local programs also have engaged in fund raising among the private bar in their communities. LAS has been most successful in raising money among members of the Omaha bar to support its programs. Approximately 7% of its revenues comes from this source. LSSN’s efforts in enlisting bar support in its community have met with a more modest response accounting for 1% of its revenues. WNLS has not undertaken local fund raising among the private bar. The challenge for a statewide fund raising campaign is twofold: not to siphon off funds that currently go to local programs but to increase the available pool of contributions and to educate contributors regarding the unmet legal needs to low income persons throughout the state and thereby energize and influence them to expand the recipients of their donations.

In regard to successful strategies used elsewhere to generate other statewide sources of revenue, e.g. state appropriations, state bar dues checkoffs and increased attorney registration fees, the state planners have examined these options within the context of the political landscape in Nebraska and concluded that these are not feasible. Nebraska has a mandatory bar. At the present time, an increase in bar dues is to be implemented to cover operating costs of the NSBA and its programs. It is highly unlikely that the House of Delegates would approve yet another increase in the dues structure to fund legal services providers. The state planners have concluded that we should focus our energies on ensuring that there is little “tinkering” with the filing fee legislation and on ensuring that the statewide NSBA sponsored fund raising campaign is a success.

The Appleseed Center has recently establish an Equal Justice Endowment Fund that will be used to support internships and student clerkships, leadership trainings, loan repayment assistance programs, pro bono projects coordinated with the NSBA and legal services providers and other opportunities to build greater access to justice for all Nebraskans. A Board member has pledged to match dollar for dollar the first \$100,000 donated to the Fund in 1998-99.

b. Goals to strengthen and expand services to eligible clients

To solicit funds from individual private attorneys and corporate donors to support ongoing programs for providing civil legal services to low income persons and special projects throughout the state

To formulate a coordinated development and promotional campaign regarding the need for civil legal services for low income persons in Nebraska

To expand the number of contributors and the funds contributed to providers of civil legal services to low income persons in Nebraska

To channel donated funds so that they may be used to provide services to low income persons in WNLS' service area and thereby expand its percentage of non-LSC revenue

To support local programs' efforts in maintaining a local funding base of non-LSC revenue

To explore various strategies to provide loan repayment assistance so that new law school graduates will be able to afford to work at Legal Services programs

To explore the feasibility of establishing internships in the offices of the various providers of civil legal services to the poor that would be funded by corporate donors or private law firms

c. Major steps and timetable necessary to achieve these goals

The statewide fundraising campaign of the NSBA will be initiated in the first quarter of 1999. Follow up will be conducted throughout the year. The fundraising campaign will be held annually

NSBA will begin development of a fundraising data base within the next 90 days.

NSBA officials will meet with the law school deans within the next 90 days to look at loan repayment systems.

7. System Configuration

The state planners have carefully assessed the State Planning Considerations and the information communicated to them by Carolyn Worrell, the LSC Program Officer for Nebraska, regarding perceptions of the inadequacy of past coordination efforts among the Legal Services providers in Nebraska. We have identified the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach, goals to strengthen and expand services to eligible clients and the major steps and timetable necessary to achieve these goals. We believe that implementation of these goals will maximize the effective and economical delivery of high quality legal services to all low income Nebraskans regardless of where they reside. At the present time, we cannot state with certainty whether or not the recommendations can be implemented through existing organizational structures or whether reconfiguration of service areas is necessary to accomplish the State Plan's goals. Nebraska would like to be given the opportunity to carry out the changes it has identified within the current configuration. As we proceed in the process, we and/or LSC may conclude that this is not possible and then we will take what steps are necessary to alter the present configuration.

As state planners, we are conscious of the dynamics that are present within Nebraska. It

is our obligation to communicate to LSC this information to help you better understand the demography, geography, resources and history of our state and how these impact on our clients and the delivery of services to them. While we cannot be captive to these factors, we cannot ignore them because to do so would be to the detriment of our clients. We must be mindful of the struggles between centralization and local control that are being faced by other entities within our state and learn from their endeavors.

The State of Nebraska has committed itself to reconfiguration of state agencies providing human services to its citizens into one large agency, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), with the goal being a more economical, uniform and seamless system of delivery of services to clients. Having embarked on this course, DHHS now has recognized and adopted a regional community plan that will be initially implemented in western Nebraska and that will focus on a regionally based integration of services. Under this plan, individual communities throughout the state will communicate with the centralized entity regarding how to utilize resources within their respective communities. In the human services arena, we now witness a change from local control to centralization of services to solicitation of local input and local control over certain aspects of service delivery.

As Legal Services providers with precious few human or financial resources to squander, we want any changes we may undertake to move from local control to centralization to be well-thought out and well-planned before we embark on implementing them. It appears that the LSC state planning process has asked us to focus on both cost efficiency and equalization of services throughout the state. The two are theoretically interdependent since cost efficiency will permit reallocation of financial resources and this will presumably result in equalization of services.

The state planners have not done a financial assessment of the effect of reconfiguration of service areas. We conjecture that there may be few, if any, financial resources freed up for reallocation given current organizational functioning. Each of the Executive Directors of the three LSC-funded programs is a case handler in addition to being an administrator. Each is his/her program's sole administrative officer. Whereas each program has either a full or part-time financial administrator and this function may be considered as a possible duplication of effort, in each case the administrator has additional responsibilities. If there were a centralized program, each local/regional office would need a Managing/Supervising Attorney to oversee the day-to-day operation of the office, as well as maintain contact and liaison with local community agencies and client groups. It is unclear at this point in the state planning process as to whether or not reconfiguration of programs within Nebraska will result in cost saving or saving of staff time that can be redirected to other activities that will benefit clients. As part of the ongoing assessment and meetings that are contemplated, this will be considered.

We have found the discussions we have entered into as part of this process to be thought provoking. They have challenged us to think more expansively than we may have done previously. We hope to have the opportunity to work with and report to the Legal Services Corporation as we formulate and implement an effective and economical system to deliver high quality services to low income Nebraskans.

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